NOTE IX.

ON DASYURUS ALBOPUNCTATUS.

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The recent discoveries in New-Guinea have shown, that this large island produces several forms of Mammalia, hitherto considered as exclusive Australian; but we did not expect even the genus Dasyurus to be represented in New-Guinea.

The species inhabiting this country appears to be new to science, and is designed by me under the above-named epithet in consequence of the numerous white spots of its dark fur.

The genus Dasyurus can be naturally subdivided into three minor groups.

The first of these comprises the true Dasyuri, characterized by their hindfeet presenting a rudimentary thumb in the form of a nailless stump. Add to this, that their tail, although well covered with hair, is not bushy, and that this member is about equal in lenght to the rest of the body. The size of these animals varies, after the species, from that of a strong Martin to that of a Pole-cat. — This group comprises four of the six known species of the genus, viz. Dasyurus maculatus or macrourus from South-East-Australia; Dasyurus geoffroyi from Western Australia; Das. hallucatus from Port Essington, a species which I have not been able to study in nature, and which is said

to differ from the other ones by the greater development of the rudimentary thumb; last of all our Das. albopunctatus from Papua.

The second group is only represented by Dasyurus viverrinus or maugei from South-East-Australia. At first sight this species, of the size of a Pole-cat, resembles the true Dasyuri by having like these the fur covered with white spots; but is at once distinguished by the entire want of a rudiment of a thumb at the hind-feet, as well as by its tail, which, being covered with long hair, is bushy, but on the contrary, somewhat shorter, its whole length equalling only that of the rest of the body without the head.

The third group is formed by Dasyurus ursinus from Tasmania, wanting, like Das. viverrinus, all trace of a thumb at the hind feet, but forming, for the rest, a species, in many instances deviating from all the others of the genus. This animal has the size of a cat. It is stouter in all its parts than the other Dasyuri; the head is greater and less elongated; the tail, occupying only one third of the length of the rest of the body is covered, like this part, with rugged hair, whose black colour is only interrupted by white at the chest, behind the shoulders and at the base of the tail.

Returning to the true Dasyuri, the largest of all, Das. maculatus, attains, the tail included, a total length of three feet one inch (French measure). The ears measure one inch and two lines. The hairs of the tail measure about nine inches. The colour of the fur is a fine red-brown, interrupted by irregular larger or smaller white spots scattered over the body and tail, but the head is unspotted and the under-part of the animal is yellowish white. — Dasyurus geoffroyi is a smaller species, its whole length attaining hardly two feet. It is easily recognized by its great ears, whose height measures eighteen lines. As to the hair of the tail, there is no difference between this species and the foregoing; but the principal colour of

the fur is a yellowish brown, rather regularly covered, with the exception of tail and head, with white spots of about half an inch in diameter.

The only specimen we possess of Das. albopunctatus is due to a Dutch missionary collecting in the range of the Arfak-mountains. Although adult it is somewhat smaller than Das. geoffroyi, its whole length being nineteen inches, from which eight and a half are occupied by the tail. It has the skull larger and the snout much shorter than D. geoffroyi; but the principal difference between our new species and all the others consists in the shortness of the hair of its tail, the hair of which measures hardly five lines, and in the numerous small white spots, which cover the dark brown fur extending to the crown of the head, but not to the tail. The underparts of the animal are, as commonly, of a whitish yellow. Length of the ear eight lines.